

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATING METHODS

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Modern archaeology is built upon the evolutionary assumption that man evolved from a stone age (lasting about 3.4 million years) to a bronze age (c. 3000-1200 BC) to an iron age, each evolutionary ascent being accompanied by changes in culture and religion.

The bronze age is said to have begun about 3000 BC, which is near the time of Noah's birth by the biblical timeline. Thus, according to evolution, Noah and his generation would barely have crawled out of the cave to exchange their stone clubs for bronze ones!

Frederic Kenyon attributed the features of the Jordan Valley to vast terrestrial movements two million years ago, and William Albright claimed that "Homo sapiens" evolved artistic abilities sometime around 30,000 to 20,000 B.C.

Even "evangelicals" commit this heresy. Consider the following statements by Alfred Hoerth, former director of archaeology at Wheaton College, in a book published by the "evangelical" Baker Books:

"Fossils and mastodons date to prehistoric times. ... The term neolithic is used to designate a period beginning with the domestication of plants and animals and ending with the introduction of metals ... The Neolithic period was a time of profound change in human society as the focus changed from hunting and gathering to domestication and farming. ... there were no metal tools in Neolithic times" (*Archaeology and the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998, pp. 15, 36, 38, 82).

Actually, there were no "prehistoric" times and no times when man did not use metal, including complex alloy metals. The Bible plainly states that Adam's immediate children knew how to domesticate plants and animals and work with brass and iron (Gen. 4:20-22), and there is no evidence that disproves this.

In fact, there is archaeological evidence of iron instruments dating to more than 1,500 years before the supposed iron age, but this evidence is typically ignored or downplayed in favor of the evolutionary scheme.

"At a site in Mesopotamia about fifty miles northeast of Baghdad, called Tell Asmar today, but known in ancient times as Eshnuna, Henri Frankfort of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago found evidence of an iron blade from the level of 2700 B.C. A small steel ax from Ur and other very early objects of iron have also been found. The fact that a greater abundance of iron has not been found seems to indicate that it was not widely used in early times, but another contributing factor may be that iron oxidizes more quickly and completely than copper and,

having disintegrated, would not be as readily detected in excavating. Numerous archaeological discoveries give evidence of the use of copper during the period 4300-3000” (Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 37).

The major supposed evidence that archaeologists use to discredit the Bible (other than the argument from silence) is their dating system, which often is contrary to the biblical dates.

For the following important reasons we refuse to accept archaeological dates that contradict the Bible:

First, the Bible has demonstrated its accuracy in the face of the most vicious assaults, whereas the skeptics have been proven wrong repeatedly.

Consider that in the 19th century, skeptics claimed that writing didn’t exist in Moses’ day. They doubted the existence of Ur of the Chaldees, of the advanced ancient city-states and religious towers mentioned in Genesis 10-11, of complex legal codes in that era, of camels in Palestine in the days of Abraham, of King David and King Solomon, of the Hittites and the Philistines, of Sargon and Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, to name a few. They said that the book of Acts was filled with historical inaccuracies.

In all of these cases and hundreds more, the skeptics were wrong and the Bible was right.

Second, the authority of the Bible is settled upon the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and His resurrection alone gives infallible witness to this claim. The evidence for Christ’s resurrection is irrefutable, as we have shown in this book. Consider just four of these: *First, there is the amazing candor of the Gospel accounts.* When someone invents a religion, he glorifies its leaders, but the four Gospels depict the founders of Christianity as very weak (e.g., Peter denying Christ thrice; the disciples fleeing and hiding; Thomas and others doubting Christ even after He appeared to them). Further, if men had made up the accounts of Christ’s resurrection in the Gospels, they would not have said that the women were the first to believe. In that day women had no authority in the eyes of society. The account of the women believing first is not something that would have been written unless it actually happened and unless the writers were committed to recording the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This striking candor is powerful evidence that the Gospels are true, unvarnished accounts. *Second, the resurrected Christ was seen by hundreds of eye witnesses,* most of whom were still alive with Paul interviewed them a couple of decades later and wrote about it in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:1-8). *Third, the resurrection dramatically changed Christ’s disciples.* Before the resurrection they were fearful and in hiding, whereas after they saw and touched Him they became bold and were willing to suffer and die for their faith.; *Fourth, the enemies of Christ have never produced His body* the tomb remains empty to this day. As George Hanson rightly said, “The simple faith of the Christian who believes in the resurrection is nothing compared to the credulity of the skeptic who will accept the wildest and

most improbable romances rather than admit the plain witness of historical certainties. The difficulties of belief may be great; the absurdities of unbelief are greater” (*The Resurrection and the Life*).

Jesus taught that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. He quoted from every part of the Old Testament as the Word of God. Some of the Old Testament people and events that Christ referred to are the creation (Mk. 13:19), Adam and Eve (Mat. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-7), Cain and Abel (Mat. 23:35; Lk. 11:50-51), Noah and the flood (Mat. 24:37-39), Abraham (Jn. 8:39-40), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:28-29), Lot’s wife turning to salt (Lk. 17:32), Moses and the burning bush (Mk. 12:26), manna from heaven (Jn. 6:31-32), the brazen serpent in the wilderness (Jn. 3:14-15), Jonah and the whale (Mat. 12:39-41; Lk. 11:29-32), Nineveh repenting at Jonah’s preaching (Lk. 11:32), Solomon and the queen of Sheba (Lk. 11:31). Christ often quoted from the book Isaiah and said the prophet Isaiah wrote it, not an unknown group of editors as the critics claim. In John 12:38-41, Jesus quoted from both major sections of Isaiah and said both were written by the same prophet named Isaiah.

Of the authority of the Old Testament, Jesus said,

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat. 5:17-18).

In this passage Jesus taught that the Old Testament is perfect even to the very letters.

He further said that “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He was saying that nothing written in the Scripture can be set aside or ignored. It is authoritative to every detail; it is a chain with no weak links.

On Christ’s authority alone we would trust the Bible and reject the skeptics.

Third, archaeological dates are uncertain by the admission of archaeologists themselves.

Paul Kriwaczek says that “ancient chronology is still very much disputed” (*Babylon: Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization*, Kindle location 1785).

In his biography of King Hammurabi of Babylon, Marc Van De Mieroop admits that the dates he gives for Hammurabi’s reign (1792-1750 B.C.) are not certain and adds,

“The chronology of early Mesopotamian history and how it relates to the Common Era is not fully clear...”

In fact, dates for Hammurabi’s life differ more than 150 years among archaeologists, having been variously dated to 1848-1806 (long chronology), 1792-1750 (middle chronology), 1728-1686

(short chronology), and 1696-1654 (ultra-short chronology) (Paul Kriwaczek, *Babylon: Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization*, 2012, Kindle location 173).

Referring to the Hittite kingdom, we are told that the resources for determining dates are “inaccurate and unreliable” and the reconstruction of the sequence of Hittite kings is “still mostly educated guesswork” (Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, p. 19).

We are told that “modern scholars” have competing theories as to the date of Abraham, ranging from 2,200 to 1,000 BC (Fant and Reddish, *Lost Treasures of the Bible*, p. 33). That is a variation of more than 1,000 years!

The *Tartaria Tablet*, which was discovered in Bulgaria in 1961, has been dated to 2,500 BC by conventional methods such as pottery and to as old as 5,500 BC by radiocarbon methods. This is a variance of 3,000 years!

To accept such a fallible system as an authority equal to that of the Bible or even greater than that of the Bible would be the height of foolishness, in our estimation.

Fourth, archaeological dating methods are based on evolutionary assumptions.

When archaeologists investigate the site of an ancient city, they dig a trench and often find layers of civilization built one on top of the other. They apply their evolutionary assumptions to this and are convinced that they are looking at the advance of civilization from a “stone age.”

Actually, while there were and are stone age people, there is no stone age. Men have lived in a wide variety of manners since the days of Adam. Most of the North American Indians in the early 19th century were “stone age” people who did not work with metal, but they lived alongside of the technologically advanced Europeans and Americans.

Societies have lost and gained knowledge of technology throughout history. After the Flood, Noah’s sons moved in many directions and occupied various parts of the world, and while some of them were highly advanced, such as those in Ur which we describe in *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* (e.g., highly literate, advanced metal working and agricultural techniques, far-flung commercial enterprises, complex musical instruments, dazzling jewelry), others were content to live simple pastoral or hunting lifestyles and some of these lost the knowledge of such things as metal working and writing.

Consider the fact that the Minoans on the island of Crete (1700-1400 BC) had flushing toilets with wooden seats and an overhead reservoir, but this technology was seemingly lost for a thousand years until re-developed in the 3rd century AD in Rome.

Archaeologists typically ignore evidence that doesn’t fit their preconceived evolutionary theories. Consider the history of writing. The evolutionary model has writing evolving from

crude pictures to complex alphabetic symbols, but consider the following facts from archaeology itself. First, the writing that is considered the oldest in existence does not feature pictures but rather a script. This is the *Tartaria Tablet*. Second, one of the oldest known writing systems, Egyptian, used a pictograph script and a non-pictograph script at the same time from the beginning. Egyptian hieroglyphic (a pictograph script) and hieratic (an alphabetic script) can be traced to the same general time in the third millennium BC. The hieratic did not arise from the hieroglyphic; rather, they had different purposes. The hieroglyphic was used, for the most part, for permanent inscriptions on stone and rock, while the hieratic was written by pen and ink on paper for everyday use.

Fifth, archaeological dating methods are based on inexact methodology.

Consider “CERAMIC TYPOLOGY.” Since the late 1800s, pottery has been viewed as one of the most trusted means of dating ancient sites. This is called “ceramic typology.” In 1890, Flinders Petrie observed that each layer at Tel Hesi contained its own unique type of pottery. The method is based on the hypothesis that types of pottery changed with time and that the prevalence of a certain type of pottery in a certain archaeological strata indicate a unique time period. The method was further developed by William Albright in the 1920s and 1930s at Tel Beit Mirsim in southern Palestine. “His work remains the basis of all modern ceramic typology, which is constantly being refined by continuing excavation” (Hoerth and McRay, *Bible Archaeology*, p. 15).

Ceramic typology presupposes that an archaeological investigator can distinguish between types of ancient pottery so infallibly that he can tell when it was made and by whom, though living thousands of years after the fact. I consider this to be nearly preposterous.

I understand that the pottery dating method has some benefit, but it must be recognized that it is very inexact and leaves wide room for subjective interpretation.

Archaeologist John Laughlin lists two serious problems:

First, a standard pottery type might have had many variants.

Second, similar ceramic types might not date to the same era; some types may have survived longer than others, and different manufacturing techniques and styles might have been introduced at different times in different locales.

Alan Millard warns: “[Pottery] cannot be very precise, for a fashion may last longer in one place than in another, and some evidence may be missed” (*Treasures from Bible Times*, p. 92).

The reason pottery is used so extensively as a dating method by archaeologists is not because it is precise, but because it is the best method that they have that can be applied to the largest number of archaeological sites.

Then there is the CARBON-14 dating method.

This is explained as follows:

“There are two basic forms of carbon: one that occurs naturally, called carbon-12 (^{12}C), and one that forms from processes acting on nitrogen in the atmosphere, called carbon-14 (^{14}C). Both of these combine with oxygen to form carbon dioxide (CO_2), which we breathe out and plants take in. When a cow eats grass, its body absorbs the carbon (both ^{12}C and ^{14}C) in the plant. When the cow dies, it stops taking in carbon (for obvious reasons). The amount of ^{12}C in the cow’s body stays the same after death, but the amount of ^{14}C changes because it returns to nitrogen. As time goes on, the amount of ^{14}C continues to decrease until nothing is left, which is supposedly about 50,000 years later. When a paleontologist finds a bone (or a piece of wood), she can measure the amount of ^{14}C and ^{12}C it contains. Based on how much ^{14}C is left, she can supposedly calculate when the animal (or plant) died” (“Dating Methods,” June 1, 2002, AnswersinGenesis.org).

Evolutionists call carbon-14 dating “absolute” and “high precision.” We are told that radiocarbon dating is now established to a wonderful degree of accuracy of plus or minus 163 years out to 26,000 years:

“The 2004 version of the calibration curve extends back quite accurately to 26,000 years BP. Any errors in the calibration curve do not contribute more than ± 16 years to the measurement error during the historic and late prehistoric periods (0–6,000 yrs BP) and no more than ± 163 years over the entire 26,000 years of the curve, although its shape can reduce the accuracy as mentioned above” (“Radiocarbon Dating,” *Wikipedia*, citing “INTCAL04 Terrestrial Radiocarbon Age Calibration,” *Radiocarbon* 46 (3): 1029–1058).

For the following reasons we know that this statement is bogus; C-14 dating is not “absolute.”

First, radiometric dating is based on unproven evolutionary assumptions.

Chiefly, it assumes that the earth is millions of years old and that the rate of radiocarbon decay has remained relatively steady. Further, it is based on the assumption that there was not a global flood that could have dramatically changed the amount of carbon-14 in the atmosphere and the rate of decay.

Remove the evolutionary assumptions, and the “high precision” vanishes. Consider the example of a burning candle in an abandoned house.

“Many scientists claim to have nearly infallible methods for determining the age of the earth and its various formations. But all of these methods are built upon two basic and unprovable assumptions: (1) the assumption of starting point or original condition and (2) the assumption of a uniform rate of change from that starting point to the present. Consider a burning candle in an abandoned house. It is now burning at the rate of one inch an hour. Question: How long has it been burning and, thus, how long ago was the house abandoned? Answer: No one can know until it can be shown how high the candle was when it was last lit and how fast it was burning originally! Question: How old is the earth? Answer: No one can know unless it can be shown

what it was like when it began and how rapidly it has changed since then!” (John Whitcomb, *The World That Perished*).

In fact, scientists now know that the amount of C-14 in the atmosphere has not been constant even in modern times.

“The level is affected by variations in the cosmic ray intensity, which is, in turn, affected by variations in the Earth's magnetosphere. In addition, there are substantial reservoirs of carbon in organic matter, the ocean, ocean sediments, and sedimentary rocks. Changes in the Earth's climate can affect the carbon flows between these reservoirs and the atmosphere, leading to changes in the atmosphere's C-14 fraction” (“Radiocarbon Dating,” *Wikipedia*).

Since this is known to be true, it is obvious that something as catastrophic as a global flood as described in Scripture--with the release of massive amounts of water from the heavens and from underground fountains on a global scale, the spewing of countless volcanoes, and the covering of the entire earth with water--would doubtless have affected the amount of C-14 in the atmosphere in a dramatic way and could also have affected the rate of radiometric decay. Further, the conditions that existed prior to the flood would be dramatically different than those that have existed since then.

But the possibility of a global flood with its implications is totally ignored by radioisotope dating scientists in spite of the evidence that exists throughout the earth.

C-14 scientists learned early on that their dates were not trustworthy unless they were “calibrated” against known historical conditions. Typically, radiocarbon tests are calibrated against tree-ring samples.

“Radiocarbon years differ from calendar years because the former are dependent on the varying content of carbon-14 in the atmosphere. Therefore a complex procedure known as calibration has been developed, which converts radiocarbon test results to calendar years by relating these results to dendrochronologically dated tree-ring samples. The calibration curve is revised periodically as more data are continuously accumulated. But the absolute date after calibration depends on which calibration formula is used. The results, depending on the calibration, can be quite different” (Radiocarbon Dating,” *Wikipedia*).

They count the rings of an ancient tree and then test the amount of carbon in the tree with carbon-14 dating equipment. If the rings say that the tree was 2,000 years old, the carbon-14 test is calibrated to return that age, because the rings are the more exact method of measuring years.

But it is known that tree rings themselves are not a foolproof way to measure time, since tree rings are not necessarily formed every year and more than one ring can be formed in a year.

“Trees would appear too old if they grew more than one ring per year. Most dendrochronologists, drawing on an influential study by LaMarche and Harlan (1973), believe that bristlecone pines do indeed add only one ring per year. Yet not all scientists accept this study. According to Harold Gladwin (1978), the growth patterns of the bristlecone trees are too erratic for dating. Lammerts (1983) found extra rings after studying the development of

bristlecone saplings. He suggested that the existing chronology should be compressed from 7,100 to 5,600 years” (Trevor Major, “Dating in Archaeology: Radiocarbon and Tree-Ring Dating,” ApologeticsPress.org).

Further, such calibration can only be done based on known historic conditions which go back only a few thousand years.

Since it has been proven that C-14 testing is inaccurate unless it is “calibrated,” it is obvious that we enter fairyland when the tests are used to date objects beyond verifiable environmental conditions.

Second, carbon-14 dating of objects is imprecise, often grossly so.

For example, a bundle of hair extensions and a linen wrapper, found in an Egyptian tomb and on display at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, was dated by the carbon-14 method to “circa 2114-1502 B.C.E.,” according to the museum’s own information plaque. That is a variance of more than half a millennium!

Third, it is a well-known fact that scientists routinely disregard “OUTLIERS.”

These are dates that are returned from radiocarbon tests but that lie outside the boundary of those that the scientists consider valid “because they do not match the majority of dated samples from the site in question” (Lily Singer-Avitz, “Archaeological Views: Carbon 14,” *Biblical Archaeological Review*, May/Jun 2009).

In other words, scientists routinely disregard (and fail to report) dates that they determine to be inaccurate, even though the radioisotope tests provide those very dates. In fact, half of the dates are rejected (R.E. Lee, “Radiocarbon, Ages in Error,” *Anthropological Journal of Canada*, 1981, vol. 19, No. 3, p. 9).

Fourth, radioisotope dating is often dramatically wrong when it can be tested.

For example, rock paintings in the South African bush in 1991 were dated by Oxford University’s radiocarbon accelerator as being 1,200 years old, which was significant because it would have been the oldest bushman paintings found in the open country. But it turned out that they were painted by Joan Ahrens’ art class in Capetown a few years earlier and deposited in the bush by thieves. After describing this humorous episode, Richard Milton comments, “The significance of incidents such as this is that mistakes can only be discovered in those rare cases where chance grants us some external method of checking the dating technique. Where no such external verification exists, we have simply to accept the verdict of carbon dating” (*Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, p. 34).

Other radioisotope dating methods are equally flawed, with numerous examples of gross contradictions between the dates obtained by these methods and the externally verified dates. The following is an example of erroneous dates obtained by the Potassium-Argon Radiometric dating method.

Rocks formed between 1949 and 1975 by the Mount Ngauruhoe volcano in New Zealand, which are therefore no more than 60 years old, were radiometric dated at between 270,000 and 3.5 million years old (A. A. Snelling, "The Cause of Anomalous Potassium-Argon 'Ages' for Recent Andesite Flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe," *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Creationism*, edited by E. Walsh, 1998, pp. 503-525).

It is obvious that we are not talking about solid science here, such as the measure of the temperature of the air or the volume of a container or the speed of an automobile in a mile. Compared to these scientific absolutes, that have been repeatedly tested and confirmed, radioisotope dating is evolutionary mumbo jumbo!

Fifth, C-14 dating has actually disproven evolutionary dates.

Since C-14 has a half-life of approximately 5,700 years, at about 50,000 years there should be no C-14 left in a sample. The progression goes like this:

At 5,700 years, half of the C-14 is gone.

At 11,400 years, half of the remaining half is gone, leaving 1/4.

At 17,100 years, half of the remaining 1/4 is gone, leaving 1/8.

At 22,800 years, half of the remaining 1/8 is gone, leaving 1/16.

At 28,500 years, half of the remaining 1/16 is gone, leaving 1/32.

At 34,200 years, half of the remaining 1/32 is gone, leaving 1/64.

At 39,900 years, half of the remaining 1/64 is gone, leaving 1/128.

At 45,600 years, half of the 1/128 is gone, leaving 1/256.

At 51,300, half of the 1/256 is gone, leaving 1/512, which is essentially nothing.

The amount of C-14 remaining at roughly 50,000 years, 1/512, is almost nothing since the amount of C-14 in a living plant or animal is incredibly minute to start with. At best, only one trillionth of .04% of the gas molecules in the atmosphere contain carbon 14! This is because carbon, mainly in the form of carbon dioxide, makes up 0.039 % of all the gas molecules in the atmosphere (this figure fluctuates), and only one trillionth of that carbon is in the form of C-14.

Therefore, there should be no detectable C-14 remaining in a plant or animal after 50,000 years, but coal deposits have been tested to that age and younger. The coal deposits are composed of dead vegetative matter and are dated to millions of years old by evolutionists, but when tested by radiometric methods they are found to contain detectable levels of C-14, proving that they are less than 50,000 years old rather than millions!

This was demonstrated by the RATE project (Radioisotopes and the Age of The Earth) conducted by a team of eight Ph.D. scientists between 1997 and 2005.

“The objective was to gather data commonly ignored or censored by evolutionary standards of dating. The scientists reviewed the assumptions and procedures used in estimating the ages of rocks and fossils. The results of the carbon-14 dating demonstrated serious problems for long geologic ages. Samples were taken from ten different coal layers that, according to evolutionists, represent different time periods in the geologic column (Cenozoic, Mesozoic, and Paleozoic). ... The coal samples, which dated millions to $\geq$ hundreds of millions of years old based on standard evolution time estimates, all contained measurable amounts of ^{14}C [carbon-14]. In all cases, careful precautions were taken to eliminate any possibility of contamination from other sources. Samples in all three ‘time periods’ displayed significant amounts of ^{14}C . This is a significant discovery. Since the half-life of ^{14}C is relatively short (5,730 years), there should be no detectable ^{14}C left after about 100,000 years. The average ^{14}C estimated age for all the layers from these three time periods was approximately 50,000 years. However, using a more realistic pre-Flood $^{14}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ ratio reduces that age to about 5,000 years” (Ken Ham, *The New Answers Book 1*, pp. 85, 86).

The details of the RATE research was published in two books: *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: A Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative* (2000) and *Results of a Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative* (2005).

Sixth, the “science” of radiometric dating has been in a flux since its invention in 1949.

Even the original half-life of carbon-14 was proven wrong by nearly 200 years. Willard F. Libby, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1960, said the half-life was 5,568 years, but that is now believed to be 5,730 years. New facts have been discovered about carbon-14 itself, about how much C-14 is in the atmosphere today and in the past, how much C-14 is contained in vegetative matter, etc. For this reason, radiometric calibration methods have been in a constant flux for six decades.

This reminds us of a university student who was running across campus one day with a textbook under his arm. Stopped by a friend who asked, “Why are you in such a hurry?” the student replied, “I just bought the newest physics book, and I am rushing to class before it is outdated.”

To allow a “science” this grossly inexact and uncertain to overthrow the Bible is the height of folly in light of the sobering eternal consequences of the matter and in light of the powerful evidences for the divine inspiration of Scripture.

In conclusion to the issue of C-14 dating, the individual does not need to be a physicist to understand the essential failing of this method. He or she needs to know only the following facts which no scientist can refute:

Fact # 1 - Scientists early on discovered that C-14 testing had to be calibrated by known historical realities (such as tree rings). They also discovered that conditions affecting the amount

of C-14 in the atmosphere have been changing even in modern times, so the original assumption that the amount of C-14 has been constant was wrong.

Fact # 2 - C-14 testing that returns dates older than known historical realities and known atmospheric conditions cannot be objective because it is based on untestable presuppositions. Unless one knows the exact atmospheric conditions at the time of the death of the plant or animal and unless one knows the exact rate of radiometric decay since then, the test is nothing more than a guess. This is particularly true since C-14 testing assumes there was no global flood as described in Genesis which could have produced dramatically different conditions than those which can be examined from the past few thousand years.

This can be illustrated by the aforementioned burning candle. If you find a burning candle in a room, how would you figure out when it was lit? You could measure the current rate at which the candle is burning down, but unless you know exactly how long the candle was when lighted and whether or not it has been burning at a steady rate, it is impossible to know for sure when it was lit.

Without these essential pieces of information, you can only guess, *and guesses are not scientific facts!*

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